

OBITUARY

HUMAYUN ABDULALI

THE Society lost a valued member and a link to the past, in the death of Mr. Humayun Abdulali on June 3, 2001. Humayun and Sálim Ali were responsible for the rejuvenation and relaunching of the Society when India attained Independence and the majority of the Society's supporters left India. They nursed the Society during this difficult period, and during the nearly ten years that he was the Honorary Secretary, Humayun saw to it that the Society again had a solid foundation in the study of Indian Natural History. Working in tandem with Sálim Ali, he ensured that the Society had the crucial support of the State and Central governments in assuring that land and funds were made available for housing the Society and its invaluable collections, and continued publication of the *Journal*, which was at that point of time the main activity of the Society.

Humayun was born on May 19, 1914 in Kobe, Japan, where his father was associated in the business of a relative. The family returned to India and settled in Mumbai in 1925. He was a student of St. Xavier's High School and later St. Xavier's College where he obtained his B.A. degree in Biology. His association with Br. Navarro of St. Xavier's High School, started his life long interest in Natural History.

Humayun was, above all, an incomparable naturalist. His interest covered all aspects of natural history and nothing was too insignificant to be denied his attention.

His significant scientific contributions include cataloguing the collection of birds at the BNHS and the study of the bird fauna of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The nearly three hundred papers he published reflect the wide scope of his interest in Indian Natural History.

He made significant pathbreaking contributions to the conservation of India's wildlife heritage. The drafting of the Bombay Wild Bird and Wild Animals Protection Act in 1951, the basic source for the Wildlife Protection Act passed in 1972, the filing of the first Public Interest litigation, which saved the Borivli National Park in Bombay from being destroyed by a highway, and the ban on the export of frog's legs and junglefowl hackles are peaks in the conservation movement in the country.

As a person, he had neither time nor patience to suffer the pretentious, and did not fail to express his opinion. He was warm hearted and a true friend to those who penetrated his armour of brusqueness. He was, above all, a person of impeccable integrity, a character which he and Sálim Ali bequeathed to the Society, their foster child.

■ J.C. DANIEL